

Pete Scazzero

RULE OF LIFE

FOR PASTORAL STAFF

GUIDELINES FOR
BEING TOGETHER

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A NOTE FROM PETE

The following Rule of Life was developed for our Staff and Leadership team during the years when I led and pastored New Life Fellowship in Queens, NYC.

As you consider your own staff and leadership team, I encourage you to borrow or modify anything from this “rule” that you find helpful in your leadership context.

I pray this sample provides a healthy starting point as you and your team seek to build an emotionally healthy church culture.

With you on the journey,

Pete Scazzero



RULE OF LIFE for Pastoral Staff
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Emotionally Healthy Discipleship is a ministry focused on equipping church leaders to make mature disciples, moving people from shallow Christianity to depth in Christ. For more information, visit emotionallyhealthy.org.

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INTRODUCTION

We believe that our ministries emerge out of a call from God to separation from the world for the purpose of prayer. It is from this place of being with Jesus that we lead others out of a heart of compassion in the fulfillment of our mission as a local church. Like David, we want to shepherd God's people "with integrity of heart" and with "skillful hands" (*Ps. 78:72*).

Yet we recognize that leadership brings out the best and worst in us. In many ways, the crucible of pastoral ministry "introduces us to ourselves." We affirm, as Parker Palmer has written that "a leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there...A good leader is intensely aware of the interplay of inner shadow and light, lest the act of leadership do more harm than good." (*Let Your Life Speak*, pp. 78-9).

In such a role, we commit ourselves to the following "rule" to keep us centered in the Lord Jesus and His call for our lives. Our purpose is, as Benedict wrote 1500 years ago, that our "way of acting should be different than the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else" (*Rule of Benedict 4:20-21*).



OUR BEING (CHARACTER)

We are essentially called to seek Him above all else (*Ps. 27:4*), that is, to be contemplatives, out of which we carry out our active ministry. At the same time, we recognize God has called us to a level of intensity to bring Jesus Christ to our city and world through serving in different roles as a pastoral staff in our church.

Freely under His grace, we determine to model the qualities of leadership laid out by the apostle Paul in 1 Tim. 3 -- above reproach, self-controlled, respectable, able to teach, hospitable, gentle, not quarrelsome, free from the love of money, managing our families well (*"If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" 1 Tim. 3:6*). Whether single or married, we minister out of our marital status; if married, our marriage covenant takes precedence over the work of the church.

We consider the vocation of pastor to be a high calling and a trust given by God. As Gregory of Nazianus taught around 370 AD: *"The responsibility of pastoral office is great indeed, and no one ought to enter who has not deeply examined motive and ability, who has not struggled against call in the face of godly demands of office and the frailty of mere humanity."*

Our aim, as a pastoral team, is to be a vital organism with a contented spirit. While we live in the world surrounded by unceasing needs, we desire to serve God out of a "joyful, non-anxious spirit" in a way that is peaceful and harmonious with others -- not agitated, hectic or confused. We do not claim to be perfect, by any means; we acknowledge difficult times in living out our "rule of life", but our commitment is to honesty and openness, asking for help when needed and living in brokenness and contriteness of heart (*Ps. 51:17*).

At the same time we want to understand who we are and who we are not, our limits and our potentials. The pastoral call involves leading out of the unique material God has given us. We desire all staff members at our church to function in roles that are congruent with their authentic selves and families.

As shepherds, leaders, and servants of this particular flock, we must regularly ask ourselves: Which of my limits are part of my God-given nature that I need to receive as a gift? Are there limits before me that God is asking me to break through because they come out of character flaws or my "false self"?

These limits and potentials are one of the means God uses to speak to us and to reveal the particular role we are able to take in service to Him. This discernment from the Holy Spirit comes, we believe, from wise counsel, self-confrontation, and those in authority over us.

OUR DOING (ACTIVITY)

Using their God-given talents, our members work and serve as volunteers out of a sense of passion and mission. We too work and serve out of a sense of passion and mission; nevertheless, we function in a dual relationship with the church board and congregation as “employees”. In fact, we have at least three roles in the community of church: we are family members, leaders in this church family and employees. These roles carry challenges in how we relate to one another and to church.

Each year, we are set apart by the Board of Elders to serve the church body in a unique way. Whether full or half-time, we are given a salary in order to fulfill this special calling free from the constraints of secular employment. The body as a whole supports us financially so that we can devote ourselves to serving the body - praying, pastoring, and equipping the saints to do ministry (*Eph. 4:11ff*). This is our privilege and our joy.

Each person called and invited to be on staff is valued as a gift from God. We long to see each staff member growing and thriving in their respective roles.

At the same time, the elder board is responsible for the stewardship of the churches' resources in our dynamic, changing environment. Our call from God to pastoral leadership may last our entire lives regardless of our employment at church. Yet we recognize the fit of what church needs and desires may change over time. Thus, our status as employees is subject to the direction God is taking the church, her resources, and our leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, we are each subject to periodic reviews regarding our job description, status and contract.

SPECIFIC RULE OF LIFE

The following “Rule of Life” expresses our conscious guidelines to keep God at the center of everything we do - to seek the “love of Christ” above all else. In a culture that does not respect God’s rhythms for life, we seek to live out a balance of prayer, rest, work, and community.

This “Rule” provides guidelines for the kind of leadership we aim to embody, as well as a foundation for the relational culture we want to build and function within.

PRAYER

1. SCRIPTURE

Our lives are built on the Word of God. It is our food and primary means of revelation from Him. We spend time each day in Scripture, seeking God’s face, dwelling in His presence and praying out of His Word.

2. SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

Along with building silence and solitude into our daily routines, we spend at least one full day a month in silence with God. (*Note: We eventually moved to choosing the third Wednesday of each month for this. Each person goes to a place outside their home, whether it is a beach, a local retreat center, or a park, to be alone with God for the day. The one requirement is not to do the work of church on that day, but to be with God.*)

3. DAILY OFFICE

Nothing is to be preferred to the work of God (Rule of St. Benedict). We pause to be with God two to three times a day to remember Him, spending time in communion with Him, preferably with Scripture, silence, meditation and prayer.

4. STUDY

We are consistently growing and taking steps to keep learning about Jesus, as well as our unique values (emotional health, contemplative spirituality, reconciliation) and our particular area of calling in Christ.

REST

5. SABBATH

Each week, we set aside a 24 hour period to keep Sabbath to the Lord, structuring our time around the following four characteristics of biblical Sabbaths – *Stop, Rest, Delight* and *Contemplate*. We also take at least an additional half day off a week to do the “work” of life and limit our work at church. We trust God to build His church and respect Sabbath-keeping as an essential formation discipline in our lives.

6. SIMPLICITY

We model percentage giving (using the tithe as a minimal guideline) in giving to God’s work here at church. We manage our material resources in a manner that honors God and avoids the traps and enticements of Western culture (e.g. *bad debt, gambling, etc.*) as we live out the basic principles of our Good Sense Course (i.e. *giving, saving, budgeting, balancing a spending plan, and planning*).

7. PLAY AND RECREATION

We have a life outside of the church for balance and health. We recognize the seasons and rhythms of leadership and the church year and plan compensatory

breaks accordingly. We build healthy “fun” into our discipleship and take vacations each year to allow the soil of our lives to be replenished and receive fresh “nutrients” from God as we take mini-Sabbaticals along the four principles of stopping, resting, delighting and contemplating.

WORK

8. SERVICE AND MISSION

Another critical issue for healthy service is having clear and realistic expectations. It is vital that we maintain an open discussion about expectations and allow for ongoing modifications as we adapt to the challenges of our rapidly changing environment. Together with our supervisors and the elder board, we regularly update our job descriptions and goals in order to meet these challenges. Then, in everything we do as pastoral leaders, we can continue to point others to Christ. In this way, “the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (*Eph. 4:16*).

9. CARE FOR THE PHYSICAL BODY

We understand the stewardship of our physical bodies is also part of our discipleship and modeling. We seek to regularly care for our physical temples through healthy eating habits, consistent exercise, and sufficient amounts of sleep, respecting our God-given limits.

RELATIONSHIPS

10. EMOTIONAL HEALTH

We are committed to a spiritual formation model that embraces our whole person, including the emotional component of who we are as image bearers of God. We embrace the skills and behaviors that put feet on our theology to love well (*1 Cor. 13*).

In all our relationships we seek to speak clearly, directly, respectfully and honestly. We aim to incarnate like Christ and listen well. We avoid making assumptions without checking them out. We negotiate our differences and clarify expectations in all our relationships. And like Christ, we seek to be present with ourselves and others, especially in the presence of anxiety, whether it be our own or that of others.

11. FAMILY

We believe in the equal value of God’s call to both singleness and marriage. We affirm with Scripture the gift of singleness for leadership (*1 Cor.7:25-40*). Both Jesus and Paul were single. At the same time, we understand the limits and great potentials of the marriage covenant for our work and our personal choices. We desire high-quality

marriages, out of which we are able to minister to others. If we are married, our spouses make their own choices and have their own needs and desires apart from us. We affirm this. Our expectation is for honesty and transparency regarding our marriages and family life with those whom God has placed in authority over us.

12. COMMUNITY (COMPANIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY)

Our roles as family members, leaders of our church family and employees carry with them a unique challenge. This complex relationship requires grace, maturity, wisdom and discernment. We encourage all staff members to be in relationships with mature people outside the church; these relationships might be with a spiritual director, a mentor, a counselor or a mature friend, depending on each person's unique needs and season in God.

As we embark on this journey, let us remember St. Benedict's great introduction to his Rule: "Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset. But as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love (*RB, Prologue, 49*).



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